

## Sydney director's beautiful Dreaming

By Will Temple  
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**THE journey to filmmaking has taken Melanie Hogan from the corporate finance division of Macquarie Bank to the world of historical drama, working with the creators of Cate Blanchett's *Elizabeth* in London.**

But it was an excursion to the heart of her homeland and an ancient philosophy that put the NIDA directing graduate's first long form project on the big screen.

Her documentary *Kanyini*, the story of author, songwriter and member of the Stolen Generation "Uncle" Bob Randall, came about when it hit her that despite a good education and opportunities she knew little of the Australian indigenous experience.

"I thought: why do I know German from high school and not Pitjatjantjara?" Hogan said. "Why do I know about Moroccan indigenous culture and not our own?"

Coupled with the self-professed "creative restlessness" that dragged her from investment banking and into film production in the first place, she set about researching in Sydney's Mitchell Library for a way to bridge this cultural gap.

It was here she discovered Randall's book *Songman*. Inspired by what she saw on the page she contacted him via the publisher in the hope of meeting him face to face in his desert home.

"It was quite impulsive," she said. "But I felt a very strong urge to go. If Bob didn't remember me I thought at least I would get to see Uluru for the first time."

But the pair hit it off, working first on an educational film for indigenous youth in the area while Hogan recorded a series of interviews with the man himself.

While initially this record was for her own personal use, the enthusiastic response of friends when she showed them the material encouraged her to take the project further.

The resulting blend of beautiful archival footage and landscapes, with Randall acting as our guide to his land, his people and philosophy, is already much acclaimed, fetching praise from critics as diverse as Toni Collette, Claudia Karvan, George Negus and Marcus Einfeld.

Randall eloquently, and without bitterness, takes us through his life story from a loving childhood in the desert to being taken away to the tropics of Arnhem Land as a result of Government policy.

He explains kanyini as the indigenous philosophy of unconditional love and connection to your belief system, spirituality, family and the land. Its absence from today's youth has been sadly filled by the hopelessness that too often hits the headlines.

"It's a film I'm hoping will inspire us to connect," Hogan said. "It wasn't about facts and figures and who's right and who's wrong. It's a humanist approach.

"I feel you'll come to understand this country and the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians much more comprehensively and with compassion and care."

For Randall, his is a message of hope he wants to spread through the film.

"Kanyini is the only way to live if you want to live the best life possible," Randall told *NEWS.com.au*.

"We have been separated for too long. We really need to listen to each other. We have to get to know each other – it's that simple."

*Kanyini* opened nationally this week on limited release. It is rated PG for mild themes.

It screens with indigenous filmmaker Warwick Thornton's short comedy *Mimi* starring David Gulpilil, Sophie Lee and Aaron Pedersen.



Journey ... filmmaker Melanie Hogan shooting at Uluru / Image supplied

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